The chairman yielded to this argument.

The welfare operations of the Council were expanding. Its stations were distributing up to forty thousand meals daily. It obtained an appropriation to give the unemployed allowances for rent and interest on pawnshop loans—an unprecedented step in Tsarist Russia, where almsgiving was the usual form of public welfare.

All this, however, did not solve our main problem. We asked for "bread and work" and obtained only bread. The Municipal Committee manifested no interest in public works, and the office of the mayor openly opposed this idea. The unemployed were becoming impatient, and I felt responsible for the delay. Indeed, the people around credited me with having gotten money for the hot-meal stations and believed that I must have some trick in my bag to get them work also. "Why don't you do something about work?" they asked me at our local headquarters and on the street.

The Council of the Unemployed convened to discuss the situation. The meeting was attended by 150 delegates, among them representatives of a score of the largest mills in St. Petersburg. The delegates suggested a new press campaign. I explained that the newspapers would have no interest in our cause during the dramatic clash between the government and the Duma. Any other plan? I had none to offer and had difficulty keeping the meeting in order. In irritation, I remonstrated with a particularly emotional speaker. "What is the point of shouting here where no councilman can hear you?"

Laughter followed this remark, but suddenly I realized that what I had said was not a joke. "Here is a plan," I said. "Let us go to the Municipal Council and tell the councilmen what the workers think of them."

"They will not admit us," Nikitin remarked soberly.

"We will crash the gate!"

"By force?" Nikitin asked.

"Why not? There are not more than twenty guards in the building. We can send a delegation of sixty or eighty men."

"But the councilmen will not listen to us. They will run away as soon as they see us," Nikitin insisted.

"We won't let them run away," I said. "How?" "The session room has two doors and we can crash both of them."

Two delegates, Malyshev and Boroda, supported my plan. If it worked, we would get something for our men; if it did not, the police would arrest us for disorderly conduct but they would not close the hot-meal stations. The meeting adopted the new plan. I told the S-D Committee casually that we were sending a new delegation to the Municipal Council. Nobody asked for details, and I